

Summary of Issue

Many women in Aurora – and Colorado – do not receive early prenatal care, increasing the risk of pregnancy complications. Women who receive regular preconception care and support are not only more likely to be in better health upon becoming pregnant but also to receive early prenatal care. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends improving preconception health by increasing consumer awareness, encouraging regular doctor visits, identifying risks, providing care before and between pregnancies, and providing health coverage [and access] to low-income women ([CDC 2006](#)).

Delay of prenatal care may be more likely among women who experience an unintended pregnancy or who do not realize they are pregnant or women who do not value prenatal care. Additionally, women who do not have access to transportation, are younger, or have limited resources may be more likely to delay prenatal care ([MCHB 2013](#), [Mayer 1997](#)).

After delivery, postpartum care for mothers is very important, but can also be difficult to access. Mothers are also likely to see their child(ren)'s pediatrician more often than their obstetrician or gynecologist. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that pediatricians screen mothers for postpartum depression, or pregnancy-related depression, at well-child checks. Because “[c]hildren of depressed mothers are more likely to display social and emotional problems, delays or impairments; poor self-control; aggression; poor peer relationships; and difficulty in school” ([CDPHE 2014](#)), encouraging health in the preconception, prenatal, and postpartum periods is so important.

By helping to ensure that all women have access to quality care throughout their reproductive years, AHA can improve the health and wellbeing of women, children, and families.

Data*

“Depression is more common among low-income women ages 18-44 and among poor and non-married mothers... Women who experience low social support and/or stress from social, economic, or structural inequality may be more likely to be depressed” ([CDPHE 2014](#)).

From 2009-2011, postpartum depressive symptoms were more common among women who experienced more stress than among women reporting less stress. “Rates were [also] higher among women who experienced unintended pregnancy, who were checked or treated for depression prior to pregnancy or who gave birth to low-birth weight infants” ([CDPHE 2014](#)).

- In Adams County, from 2010-2011, 39.3% of new mothers reported experiencing 1-2 stressful life events in the year before delivery and 16.1% reported experiencing 3-5 stressful life events in the year before delivery.
- In Arapahoe County, from 2010-2011, 32.9% of new mothers reported experiencing 1-2 stressful life events in the year before delivery and 15.6% reported experiencing 3-5 stressful life events in the year before delivery.

Colorado's Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS)

From 2010-2011, 31.8% of women in Adams County and 30.2% of women in Arapahoe County noted that their recent pregnancies were unintended and 13.6% in Adams County and 15.1% in Arapahoe County said that they did not enter prenatal care as soon as they would have liked.

**Lack of Aurora-specific data remains a challenge at this time and suggests an opportunity moving forward*

Current initiatives that address issue

Local public health agencies, including Tri-County Health Department and Denver Public Health, provide preconception health services – including family planning and reproductive life planning – prenatal services – including Medicaid

enrollment support, medical home navigation, nutrition information and support through WIC – and postpartum services and programs – including reproductive health, infant nutrition services through WIC, breastfeeding support and education, and partnership and systems building to create more awareness and understanding among women, professionals, and medical providers of the importance of pregnancy-related depression screening and service provision.

Local community agencies, including the Early Childhood Partnership of Adams County, provide services, resources, and support to recent mothers and their babies.

Initiatives that support medical and behavioral health integration also support this issue.